

Testimony of Marc Smith
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Michigan Senate Outdoor Recreation & Tourism Committee

Hearing on the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) package, SB 508-510
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Chairman Geoff Hansen and Members of the Committee, good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bills 508 and 510.

My name is Marc Smith and I am the Senior Policy Manager with the National Wildlife Federation's Great Lakes Office in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Since 1936, the National Wildlife Federation has sought greater protection and restoration of our Great Lakes. Specifically, NWF is working to stop the siege of lakes by invasive species from all sources.

Many scientists believe that invasive species are the worst problem facing the Great Lakes. They wreak havoc on the fishery, clog water intake valves of cities and utilities, and foul beaches. Invasive species cost the Great Lakes region hundreds of millions of dollars each year. Asian carp is the latest threat and it could be the worst invader of all time if it establishes breeding populations in the lakes.

Furthermore, invasive species are causing the foundation of the Great Lakes food web to crash, interfering with the health, recreation, and enjoyment of millions of Americans, and dramatically harming the sport and commercial fishery.

Recent science shows that invasive species are radically changing the Great Lakes ecosystem in ways we are just beginning to understand. In the offshore waters of Lake Huron, fish biomass has declined by 95% in just 10 years – a massive ecosystem breakdown. Scientists predict similar declines could occur in Lake Michigan. The cause? Scientists are still researching the issue, but one likely factor is widespread ecosystem change (including nutrient cycling) caused by invasive mussels. Quagga and zebra mussels are causing extensive changes to the food web by filtering nutrients near shore – thus reducing nutrients from reaching the open lake. The result is that native deepwater fish – who need nutrients to survive - are paying the price as their prey base is decimated.

These problems require strong and immediate action. Therefore, National Wildlife Federation commends Senator Walker for his leadership in stepping up to combat invasive species and his seriousness in ramping up Michigan's efforts to respond and be proactive to this threat.

Moreover, we applaud his approach towards strongly encouraging collaboration with other Great Lake states and provinces to work together in order to protect our Great Lakes and the fish and wildlife that depend upon them. We believe that SB 508 – 510 will help accomplish this goal.

In conclusion, thank you again for this opportunity to testify. National Wildlife Federation is committed and ready to work with Senator Walker and other Members of this Committee, the MI DEQ, the Governor and all related stakeholders in adopting this legislation.

The Great Lakes are once again at a tipping point caused by further disruption from invasive species, and it is once again time for us to join forces, get creative, and work together to address this serious threat.

Thank you.